

National Meth Awareness Day Set for Nov. 30-Cantwell-Baird Meth Awareness Legislation Made Official- (October 31, 2006)

Washington, D.C. - Senator Maria Cantwell and Congressman Brian Baird today announced the Administration has heeded their call for greater awareness of the meth epidemic and declared November 30 to be National Meth Awareness Day. Cantwell and Baird succeeded in passing legislation (S. Res. 313 and H. Res. 556) earlier this year that called for the designation of an entire week to increase awareness of the meth epidemic and educate the public about the dangers of meth use. The Department of Justice ceded a single Meth Awareness Day - November 30 - which DOJ will officially announce on Wednesday.

"Raising awareness about the dangers of meth is absolutely vital to keeping this devastating drug out of our communities," said Cantwell. "A new meth awareness day during the school year will help educators and law enforcement personnel across our state confront this epidemic, raise awareness, and direct people to the help and assistance they need."

Cantwell and Baird advocated for a Meth Prevention Week in response to the growing dangers that the sale and use of meth have brought to our communities. In recent years, the numbers of meth-related arrests and meth treatment admissions have increased dramatically. The lawmakers are also concerned about links between meth abuse and identity theft, domestic violence, and child abuse and the influx of foreign meth coming across U.S. borders. Cantwell and Baird asked the Administration to establish Meth Prevention Week during the school year so teachers and administrators will have an opportunity to engage students in meth prevention lessons and activities.

"As a former clinical psychologist who worked with meth-addicted patients, I know how devastating this drug can be," said Baird. "Prevention and education are key to stopping the spread of the meth epidemic. On November 30, we can help raise awareness of meth abuse and educate young people about the dangers of this deadly, ruinous drug."

The legislators' meth awareness proposal received the support of the National Association of Counties (NACo), National Criminal Justice Association, National Narcotic Officers Associations' Coalition, and private companies like Drugstore.com.

"We have worked hard to pass this legislation in the House and Senate and we're glad to see the Administration respond," said Cantwell and Baird. "We hope this is more than symbolic and a real sign that the Administration is truly committed to the fight against methamphetamine. As the President crafts his budget proposals for next year, he should maintain or increase funding to combat meth, not propose budget cuts like he did this year. We also hope the Administration will respond to our requests and to legislation calling for an international meth summit to address the influx of international meth and its precursors."

Senator Cantwell has worked tirelessly to promote meth awareness initiatives, increase funding for anti-meth programs, and move meth ingredients behind pharmacy counters. Earlier this year, Cantwell worked with her colleagues to include the Combat Meth Act and other anti-meth measures in legislation to re-authorize the Patriot Act. This new law restricts

the sale of products used to produce meth, provides funds to help those affected by meth use, and gives new tools to states, law enforcement, and prosecutors working to combat meth.

Cantwell has also sponsored the Arrest Methamphetamine Act to curb meth trafficking across the U.S.-Canadian border into Washington, as well as legislation to investigate the link between meth crimes and other criminal activity such as identity theft.

Baird, a national leader in the anti-meth fight, founded the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine in 2000 and helped write the comprehensive Combat Meth Epidemic Act that was signed into law earlier this year. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) requested Baird's input on meth for its 2006 National Drug Control Strategy and 2006 Synthetic Drug Control Strategy, and implemented a number of his suggestions.

The Congressman has also been instrumental in bringing millions of federal dollars to Southwest Washington's law enforcement to help fight meth in our local communities. He is leading the congressional effort to stop the international influx of meth coming across our nation's borders, and has publicly called on President Bush to convene an international summit that will bring world leaders together to address the worldwide meth epidemic and craft a coordinated strategy to stop international meth trafficking.

DOJ is setting up a new website, www.usdoj.gov/methawareness, to support the goals of Meth Awareness Day.

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